Amendments to the Claims

1. (original) A processing unit for an electronic instrument comprising:

a signal/data processor;

an exposed external electrical contact for receiving electric power input;

an exposed external electrical contact for receiving an electric signal input;

an exposed external electrical contact for transmitting an electrical signal output; and

a housing comprising mechanical retention features for securely attaching a battery/input/output module.

2. (original) The processing unit of claim 1, wherein said processing unit comprises a memory.

3. (original) The processing unit of claim 1, wherein said processing unit comprises a keypad.

4. (original) The processing unit of claim 1, wherein said processing unit comprises a microprocessor.

5. (original) The processing unit of claim 1, wherein the contacts may be sealed through the attachment of a cover to the surface of said housing.

6. (original) The processing unit of claim 1, wherein said processing unit comprises a display.

7. (original) The processing unit of claim 6, wherein said display is a touch panel display.

8. (previously presented) A portable battery/input/output module for a portable electronic instrument comprising:

a storage device for electric energy;

an exposed external electrical contact for transmitting electric power;

an exposed external electrical contact for receiving an electric signal input;

an exposed external electrical contact for transmitting an electrical signal output;

a housing comprising mechanical retention features for securely attaching a processing unit.

9. (original) The battery/input/output module of claim 8, wherein the contacts may be sealed through the attachment of a cover to the surface of said housing.

10. (original) The battery/input/output module of claim 8, further comprising a serial port electrically coupled to said exposed electrical contact for transmitting an electrical signal output.

11. (original) The battery/input/output module of claim 8, further comprising a parallel port electrically coupled to said exposed electrical contact for transmitting an electrical signal output.

12. (original) The battery/input/output module of claim 8., further comprising a wireless transceiver for data communications electrically coupled to said exposed electrical contact for transmitting an electrical signal output.

13. (original) The battery/input/output module of claim 8, further comprising an embedded inductive charger for said energy storage device.

14. (original) The battery/input/output module of claim 8, further comprising a power input port for charging said energy storage device.

15. (previously presented) A portable electronic instrument comprising:

a portable processing unit comprising:

a signal/data processor;

an exposed external electrical contact for receiving electric power input;

an exposed external electrical contact for receiving an electric signal input;

an exposed external electrical contact for transmitting an electrical signal output; and

a housing comprising mechanical retention features for securely attaching a battery/input/output module; and

a portable battery/input/output module coupled with said portable processing unit, said battery/input/output module comprising:

a storage device for electric energy;

an exposed external electrical contact for transmitting electric power;

an exposed external electrical contact for receiving an electric signal input;

an exposed external electrical contact for transmitting an electrical signal output; and

a housing comprising mechanical retention features for securely attaching a processing unit.

16. (original) The portable electronic instrument of claim 15, wherein said portable electronic instrument is sealed.

17. (original) The portable electronic instrument of claim 15, wherein said portable electronic instrument may be powered by coupling an external power source to said battery/input/output module.

18. (original) The portable electronic instrument of claim 17, wherein said external power source may be inductively coupled to said battery/input/output module.

19. (original) The portable electronic instrument of claim 15, wherein said portable electronic instrument is a handheld computer.

20. (original) The portable electronic instrument of claim 15, wherein said portable electronic instrument comprises a global positioning system (GPS).